

7-12
TWO
DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED

JULY 23, 1812,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY

THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

FOR

FASTING AND PRAYER,

ON ACCOUNT OF THE

WAR WITH GREAT-BRITAIN.

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FAST DISCOURSE.

MY FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

NEVER did we assemble in this house on an occasion like the present. Though we have annually observed a day of solemn fasting and prayer, yet on these days we have found ourselves, and our country, in circumstances of peace and prosperity. We have beheld the judgments of Heaven only afar off. For twenty years, we have gazed with astonishment upon the scenes of desolation in Europe. We have seen her governments overturned, her cities plundered and burnt, her rights and liberties trampled under foot, her citizens dragged into war, and her fields covered with blood. But in contemplating these scenes of horror, a conviction that we were secure from those judgments with which God, in his anger, was visiting the Eastern World, was sometimes alleviated to our minds. This conviction arose partly from our removal from the theatre of war, and partly from a belief, that neither our interest, inclination or honor would require us to engage in a contest, which has spread distress and ruin over so large a portion of the world. But alas! how have we been disappointed! Our rulers have plunged us into war; the country is called to arms, and we are now a party in that contest, which has convulsed the world, demolished thrones, and marked its progress with misery and blood.

Though a war may sometimes be necessary, to defend the lives and liberties of a people, none, but

those who are destitute of all moral principle, and all regard for the best good of their country, will ever discover tokens of joy at such an event. It is a frown from heaven on any nation, and should be regarded as a loud and solemn call to weeping and mourning. This is the most distressing of all temporal calamities. But the war in which we are engaged is attended with circumstances peculiarly painful. It was unexpected. A great part of the people in these Northern States could not believe the government would appeal to arms, until the melancholy tidings were officially announced. This war has been declared, against the general voice of that portion of the people, who have suffered most from foreign aggression. It has taken place at a time when an unusual number of our citizens, and a large amount of property, are abroad, and are thrown by this event into circumstances of great hazard. Our country too is destitute of that preparation to maintain the war, which is the best evidence to ensure a speedy return of peace. Division and contention pervade our councils, and our country. We are engaged in hostilities with the nation from which we descended, which has for many ages ably maintained and supported the religion we profess, against the corruptions of popery on the one hand, and the assaults of infidelity on the other, and whose example, in spreading the gospel, and evangelizing the world, it has been the glory of our country to imitate. We have some reason also to apprehend an alliance with that nation, which has shown herself the enemy of Liberty, of Justice, and true Religion; whose influence is *poison*, whose friendship would be *death*.

Impressed with these considerations, what reason have we for fasting and prayer! After a declaration of war against Great-Britain was announced, the public mind was much agitated, and no intimation having been given of a National Fast, our excellent Governor, at the request of the House of Representatives, and by advice of his Council, appointed this

day for public fasting and prayer throughout the Commonwealth.

My brethren, the duty is important and solemn; and who will neglect it, that fears God, and loves his country? Whatever may be our professions of attachment to the land that gave us birth, if we have no disposition to look to Heaven for assistance in a time of national calamity, our patriotism is no better than *sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*. Lawless mobs, and fiery zeal, will only heighten the anger of Heaven against us. We must bring before God a heart deeply affected with the awful calamity that has fallen on our country, and under a solemn conviction, *that our iniquities testify against us*, and are the procuring cause of all our troubles, in whatever way and by whatever means they are brought upon us, we must humble ourselves before God, confessing our sins and imploring his mercy. In the prophecy of JOEL, II^d chapter, 12th and 13th verses, there is a passage well suited to the present occasion.

Now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

THIS earnest call to repentance, fasting and prayer, was given to Judah, at a time when their country was in imminent danger. Their sins had provoked the displeasure of Heaven, and God was about to visit them with desolating judgments. By a vast multitude of locusts coming on the land, darkening the heavens by their immense swarms, and spreading terror and desolation through the country, is represented the invasion of the Chaldean army, and the distress and ruin which would attend it. Read the eleven first verses of this chapter, and you will find an awful, but faithful picture of the calamities of war; a pic-

ture, which may well cause every countenance to turn pale, and every heart to quake.

In view of this approaching judgment, what was Judah to do? Were they to resign themselves to the pleasure of their destroyers? or muster their forces, and rely for protection on an arm of flesh? Either of these measures alone would have evinced a degree of cupidity, and atheism, deserving severe chastisement. The Lord by his prophet called upon the whole nation to return to him by fasting, and weeping, and fervent supplication, as the only means of averting the judgments which were hanging over the country, or of being recovered from their fatal effects.

In this discourse, I shall mention some of the sins of this land, shew that turning to the Lord by repentance and prayer is the principal means of preventing, or removing, national calamities, and point out the manner in which this duty is to be discharged.

Sin is the cause of all suffering. This sentiment no man will question; yet how few are restrained from iniquity by a consideration of the miseries they may bring upon their country! On our annual fast, my brethren, I set before you the sins of this nation, and exhorted you to return to God by repentance and prayer. I warned you that judgments were preparing for us, and that if we went on in our iniquities, God would visit us for these things, and ~~visit~~ his soul on such a nation as this. We are a people laden with iniquity. This land has been greatly prospered, and we have become opulent and powerful. Perhaps no nation was ever laid under higher obligations to God, than the people of these United States. But how ungrateful have we been! How many and how provoking are our sins! No part of our country is so moral, and attentive to christian institutions, as New-England. Yet what crying sins prevail among us! What abundant cause for fasting and prayer do we see among ourselves! And if this be the most moral part of the country, what shall we say of the rest!

Take a survey of the morals of the people through the Union, and see what unnumbered crimes present themselves to view. How do intemperance, profanity, lying and slander abound! What extravagance and luxury, what criminal diversions and pleasures, prevail in some of our opulent towns! And what ignorance and carelessness in respect to the doctrines and duties of religion every where abound! Deism and infidelity have made inroads upon us, and many adore the glimmering light of reason, and despise the Sun of Righteousness. These are marks of a degenerate people. How far are people from being humbled under the frowns of Heaven! Multitudes not only neglect the duties of christianity, but wholly overlook a superintending Providence; and even the Senate of the United States lately spent the whole of the christian sabbath in transacting public business. Wickedness prevails in all quarters; and it is the duty of every good citizen, especially of all who are set for the defence of the country, to bear their testimony against it. These crimes have provoked Heaven, and distress and darkness have come upon our land. Our commerce, one great source of our wealth, is cut off, and we are threatened with more ruinous disasters.

The Lord of Hosts is the supreme governor of the world; to him belong all the kingdoms of men. It is his prerogative to deal with nations, to bless or punish them in this life as he may determine. He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, when every individual will receive according to the deeds done in the body. But as nations will not subsist in a civil capacity in another world, they can be punished only in this life. In the present state, there are many relations between the different members of society. They receive many mercies in common with one another, and there are many sins, which prevail through the community, which are properly national sins. And when a people have cast off the fear of God, and corrupted them-

selves, it is the usual method of Providence to chastise or destroy them. Nations are generally threatened, before they are punished. The voice of Providence declares to them, that judgments are preparing for them, that all who understand the signs of the times may know what they ought to do. When therefore the clouds of divine anger hang over any people, or for a serious calamity has actually come upon them, they may know their sins have reached up to heaven, and that the Lord of Hosts is about to enter into judgment with them. In such a situation, what are people to do? My text teaches them. They cannot hope to prevent or remove their afflictions, unless they turn to the Lord with all their hearts by fasting and supplication. Judgments are the punishment of sin, and repentance and prayer are the appointed means to obtain deliverance from them. For many years the judgments of Heaven have been hanging over this land; but we have not turned unto God, and hence they have come down upon us in one general and distressing calamity. We are now loudly called upon to turn to the Lord, by fasting and prayer. These are the means, which alone can encourage us that our afflictions will be mitigated or removed.

The divine conduct towards individuals and nations is regulated by the same principles. All men are sinners. A plan of mercy has been devised and published to the world, by which every penitent may be pardoned, and exempted from the punishment due to sin. Every sinner, who now exercises repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and makes supplication for mercy, is graciously forgiven, and made an heir of eternal life. In like manner, when a goodly number in a guilty nation repent and turn to God by fasting and prayer, the Lord repents of the evil he had thought to do to that people. He is as ready to pardon a guilty nation, as a guilty individual. The Lord is slow to anger, of great kindness, and delights in mercy,

Fasting and prayer is the old established way of obtaining help from God. This appears from the sacred history. In the reign of Jehoshaphat, many heathen nations formed a league against Judah, collected a great army, and were in full march for Jerusalem. The king was greatly troubled, and set himself to seek the Lord. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah; and the people gathered themselves to ask help of God. The king himself took the lead in the public solemnities, and earnestly besought the protection of Heaven. The people seemed, with one heart, to unite with their king. Their prayer was heard in heaven, and they obtained an easy victory over their combined foes. When the same country was threatened with the judgments of Heaven in the time of Josiah, that pious king set himself to seek the Lord God of his fathers. He abolished idolatry, and used every means to effect a reformation through the land. In this good work he was in some measure successful, and the anger of Heaven was turned away from them for a season. When Jonah was sent to preach to the great city of Nineveh, and to cry against it, that in forty days Nineveh should be overthrown; the people believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest unto the least of them. Even the king took off his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He commanded every man to turn from his evil way; for said he, *Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

In these instances, recorded for our example and encouragement, you see how approaching judgments were turned away from a guilty people. Prayer and fasting were the principal means of obtaining exemption from threatening calamities. When an individual assaults us, we may resist or flee; but when God undertakes to deal with us, shall we think to stand

before Omnipotence? We can neither deliver ourselves out of his hand, nor escape his righteous vengeance. We can only flee for refuge to his infinite mercy. When God undertakes to deal with a nation, he will overcome; he will either humble or destroy. Obstinate impenitence under the frowns of Heaven, therefore, only prolongs misery. It heightens the anger of Heaven, and turns chastisements into exterminating judgments.

Jehovah is on a mercy seat; he waits to be gracious, and in wrath remembers mercy. He will hear the cry of repentance and faith; he will never cast away those who cast themselves upon his mercy. Hear what God says: *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion; I will take away, and none shall rescue; I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.* Again: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. The Lord shews them in what manner they must return, and then adds, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him.* And what can be more in point than the words of my text? Now, *saieth the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.* Hence you see that the means by which national calamities have been removed is a turning to God by repentance and earnest supplication; and that God encourages us with the hope of acceptance if we thus return to him. It is not enough that a few individuals turn from their sins, and supplicate the throne of grace. Many must seriously engage in the business of reformation, and be earnest in their prayers for the salvation of their country.

But it is necessary I should point out the manner in which we must return to God. This is clearly mark-

ed in my text. *Now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments.* To turn to the Lord with all the heart implies a separation from all idols, a renunciation of every sin, and sincerity in opposition to all hypocritical service. Many in the time of trouble will discover some marks of humility and concern; they may be anxious that God would remove their afflictions: but their hearts may be unaffected; they may still cleave to their idols. And while their hearts are unbroken for sin, the great purpose for which afflictions are sent is not answered. Though such people may fast and pray, they are neither penitent nor humble. Hence God addresses them in this manner: *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.* Now instead of offering to God mere lip service, we must return to him with all our hearts. We must be filled with self abasement and self abhorrence, with godly sorrow and unfeigned contrition; our hearts must be broken off from sin. With unfeigned submission to the righteousness of God, we must earnestly supplicate the pardon of our sins and the sins of this nation. This should be accompanied with fasting, and other tokens of humiliation. To abstain from food, so far as health and circumstances will allow, is a suitable acknowledgement that we have forfeited our most common mercies; it is some proof also that we are so deeply engaged in our religious services, that we cannot suffer the least interruption, not so much as to eat and to drink. In this way we ought to submit to the chastisement of a righteous Providence, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

If we be suitably affected with our own sins, and the sins of this land, we shall turn to the Lord with that sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. Outward expressions of sorrow will not suffice; we must rend our hearts in deep contrition and self abasement, firmly believing there is no hope or help for us but in the unmerited mercy of God. In this duty all the people in this land, *both in private and public life*, ought to engage. We are required to return to God with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. What expressions of sorrow and contrition! And will not Judah and Nineveh rise up in the Judgment day and condemn us, if we refuse to repent and return to God? They repented, when they were seriously threatened with the anger of Heaven, and made supplication for mercy. Their example encourages us, and nothing but obstinate impenitence will hinder any from returning to God. O! my brethren, *be afflicted, and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will raise you up.* Join earnest prayer with your repentance and fasting, and cry to God for your country, that peace and prosperity may be restored to these United States.

To encourage you in this duty, I would observe, that we have some reason to think Heaven will regard our supplications, and shorten the period of our troubles. Three States unite in fasting and prayer this day. The thirtieth of the present month is set apart for this important purpose in the States of New-York and Pennsylvania, and a day is appointed for the whole Union to engage in supplicating Heaven in behalf of our common country. Multitudes undoubtedly will wholly neglect, and even despise, these religious exercises, and others only prevaricate with God; yet may we not hope that a large number will fast and pray, and afflict their souls? Our country contains many thousands of real christians, who will humble themselves and intercede with God that his anger

may be turned away from us. On these days of fasting and prayer *they* will publicly honor God and religion, ascribe righteousness to their Maker in bringing calamities upon us, confess before him all their sins, and renouncing dependence on an arm of flesh, ask help from heaven. When a nation under any heavy judgment persists in its wickedness, its doom approaches. But when a guilty people condemn themselves, justify the Lord, and look up to heaven for help, their measure of iniquity is not full, mercy is in store for them. Did not God prolong his patience towards Ahab, merely because of his external humiliation? In the reformation which took place in the time of Josiah, multitudes turned to the Lord only in appearance, yet his anger was turned away from them for a season. Had Sodom contained but ten righteous persons, that corrupt city had been spared. And will not God spare this great nation? will he not hear the prayers that are offered, and save his heritage from reproach? O let us search ourselves, and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord. Sin is a reproach to any people; righteousness exalteth a nation. Let us call to mind our own sins, and the sins of this land, and humble ourselves for them before God. Let us unite with our repentance and fasting, earnest prayer to God for our country. Let us pray that the calamity that has come upon us may humble the people, and be overruled for their good. *Now therefore, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*

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JAMES IV. 1.

Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?

WAR is the scourge of man, the instrument of desolation and death. It has been raging in our world in almost every age. Ever since Cain arose against his brother, and shed his *righteous blood*, the earth has been a field of battle, and men have been the destroyers of one another. The mournful and ruinous effects of war have been felt among all nations. What is the history of the world, but an affecting account of contests, of massacres, of wasting sieges and bloody battles?

This great calamity having come upon our land, it is fuitable we should reflect on the evils it produces, and inquire whence it comes. Among all the judgments, with which God in his righteous providence has visited our guilty world, no one is so much to be deprecated as war. What wretchedness and misery has it occasioned! How many have fallen by the hand of the assassin! How many flourishing cities have been plundered and burnt! How many populous countries laid waste! How many thousand millions of the human race has the sword of war devoured! The sacred history gives an account of one battle in which *twelve hundred thousand men* were engaged; and that one of the armies lost, in a single day, *five hundred thousand chosen men*. This is the greatest slaughter in one engagement of which we have an account. Such

an event must clothe a nation in mourning. Many hundred thousand have been slain in battle, and cut off by those calamities which war produces, within the last twenty years. The nations of Europe have enjoyed but short intervals of peace. Blood has been almost constantly flowing, on the land and on the sea. More than a million of men are now in arms on the continent of Europe; and Great-Britain has six hundred and forty thousand men in her army and navy. The instruments of war have become as common, and are thought as necessary, as the implements of husbandry. Men are trained up to the art of war; they are taught from early life the skilful use of cannons, of guns and of swords; and when they have been long familiar with these instruments, they engage in war as they would in a lawful and regular business.

If one man rises against another and takes away his life, whatever may be the provocation, he is a murderer, and every heart is filled with horror at the deed. But kings and nations may declare war for the least provocation, send out their armies, and destroy thousands of innocent men, and all is right in their own eyes. The rulers of this world seem to consider themselves the sovereign disposers of mankind; that they have authority over the lives and property of men, and can at their pleasure commission others with authority to plunder and destroy the human race. They legalize robbery and murder, in every form in which they can be perpetrated, and think to wash their hands, and say, *We are free from the blood of all men.* What cruel and ambitious wars have been waged in Europe in our days, and what scenes of desolation and wretchedness have we beheld!

But the blood which is shed, and the distress and terror which are produced, are far less evils, than the effects of war on the morals of society. Pestilence, famine and fires tend to reform rather than to corrupt mankind; but war turns men into ferocious beasts, and teaches them to delight in blood and car-

nage. War tends to extinguish in the human breast every sentiment of compassion and tenderness, and after a little experience in this business, people can sport with those scenes, which once would have filled them with distress and sorrow.

These considerations force on our minds the important question, *Whence come wars and fightings?* What powerful cause throws the world into disorder, and spreads misery and death over the earth? To this inquiry my text furnishes an answer: Wars and fightings come from the lusts of men. This is the source of every war which has ever been waged under heaven. All divisions, contentions, and murders, all little quarrels, as well as terrible wars, have one common origin, the ungovernable lusts of men. This teaches us why men discover so little sympathy for those who suffer from war; why they hear of thousands slain in battle with unconcern.

By lust is intended that corrupt principle, which naturally prevails in the hearts of men; it is an excessive craving after the pleasures, the riches and honors of the world. This propensity to idolize the world produces all those vices and enormities with which the world abounds. Says James, *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.* Man is a fallen creature. Destitute of any conformity to the law of rectitude, and abandoned to the controul of ungovernable appetites and passions, he breaks through all restraints to obtain the objects of his desire. People lust after a forbidden object, then purpose the gratification of their desire, and outward transgression is the natural consequence. In this way all outward sin is committed; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death as its legitimate fruit. Here is the origin of all the evils which prevail through the world. *Ye lust and have not, ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain. Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.* These remarks were

peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the Jews, at the time this epistle was written. They were divided into parties, which were furiously preying upon one another. Every conviction of duty, and principle of equity, were suppressed; the rage of angry passions silenced the voice of conscience and reason. They eagerly coveted honor, and riches, and power. Each party wished to accomplish its own purposes, disappointment increased its violence, civil war was excited, and they imbrued their hands in their neighbors' blood. No crime was too heinous for them to commit when goaded on by their headstrong passions. Now all this disturbance and fighting proceeded from their lusts.

I have defined lust as a general principle; the scriptures distinguish it into two branches, *lusts of the flesh, and of the mind*. The former include all unclean desires, and all intemperance in eating and drinking; by the latter are meant pride, covetousness, envy and unbelief. These lusts are denominated *ungodly*, because they continually influence men to renounce their allegiance to God, and trample on his law. They are *devilish*, instigated by Satan, and liken men to him. They are *deceitful*, because they induce people to think their happiness consists in their gratification. They are *hurtful*, because they eventually pierce men through with many sorrows, waste their constitution, and drown them in perdition.

The lust of riches, of popularity, and power, has destroyed the peace of man in every age, and kept the world in a state of turmoil. The fire of lust yet burns with increasing fury, the world is in commotion, and peace and friendly intercourse among the nations is not to be expected so long as these ungovernable passions predominate in the hearts of men.

To what crimes does not the avaricious thirst of riches urge men? Deceit and falsehood, oppression and fraud, injustice and theft, robbery and murder, are practised to gratify the lust of wealth.

The desire of fame, of that honor which cometh from men, will dispose people to endure fatigue, encounter danger and death, practise every species of fraud and corruption, and even drench nations in blood.

One man has no natural right to dominion over another. But urged by the lust of power, he will risk his life, and destroy the reputation, comfort and happiness of thousands. How much blood and treasure have been wasted by individuals, that they might have dominion over men! Those who have been accounted great men—the Alexanders, and Cæsars, and Napoleons, whom the world have consented to honor, have been indeed the destroyers of mankind, public robbers and murderers, whose names ought to go down to posterity loaded with infamy. They have been blinded and infatuated by the lust of applause and power.

The principles of justice between individuals and nations are not difficult to be understood, and might be amicably settled, were it not for the lust of wealth and power. And when nations cannot settle their clashing claims, they resort to arms, and spread terror and death through extensive regions, that they may gratify their violent passions.

These lusts, which occasion so much disturbance and misery in the world, *war in our members*. War first begins in the human breast; here is its centre, the seat of its influence. Men lust after many objects which interfere with one another. Hence the evil propensities of the heart mutiny, they raise an intestine war, they prey upon the soul, and fill the mind with disquietude and confusion. The minds of men not unfrequently resemble a contentious family, or a neighborhood where division and strife prevail. Conscience and lust, reason and appetite, set them at variance with themselves. "One lust wars against another, as all cannot be gratified, and each will strive for the mastery." Divisions and quarrels in families, in neighborhoods, and nations, arise from the same source.

The proud and avaricious lusts of men interfere, broils, animosities and fightings ensue, and society is turned into the very image of hell. "Were the fire of lust within but quenched, these flames would immediately go out. But a depraved heart, like an unruly tongue, sets on fire the course of nature, and is itself set on fire of hell. When these lusts inflame the hearts of public characters, of kings and magistrates, they set the world in a blaze; and if the people are fired with the same passions, they only add fuel to increase the flame."

Thus you see, my brethren, that all the persecutions, the massacres, the cruel and bloody wars, which have harassed the church, disturbed society, and spread misery and death over the earth, have proceeded from the lusts of men. Man having cast off the fear of God, and rejected the only rule of duty, a host of evil passions destroy his peace, and raise a war in his soul. One member of his corrupt nature wars against another, and that in its turn prevails, and is gratified. This is the case with all the unnumbered millions of men, excepting only those whose hearts have been renewed by the grace of God. Hence we need not wonder at the awful crimes which have abounded in every age of the world; we need not wonder at the robberies and murders which have been committed, the miseries and tortures which have been inflicted, the scenes of confusion and desolation which have been multiplied and spread over the earth. As long as the voice of reason and justice is overpowered by the noise of contending passions and clashing interests, this world will be a place of division, tumult and war. Having elucidated my text, I would call your attention to some reflections suited to the circumstances of the times.

I. The prevalence of wars and fightings is an affecting proof of human depravity.

The instruments of death, which men have skilfully devised, and the savage wars, which have been waged

in civilized as well as heathen nations, are a most convincing proof, that man is a fallen creature, the slave of imperious passions, and the very child of the devil. Could devils themselves be engaged in more horrid work, than torturing and butchering the human race? People of one common origin, of the same language, religion and manners, like wolves and bears destroying one another! Could innocent beings be actuated by such dreadful passions, and tear one another in pieces? Can it be supposed, such creatures love the Lord their God with all their heart, and their neighbors as themselves? Would love to God and man turn people into ferocious beasts, and inflame them with infernal passions? Could holy beings engage in the dreadful work of torture and murder? No, my brethren; by their fruits ye shall know them. Did the love of God reign in the hearts of the children of men, an end would speedily be put to such scenes of cruelty and death. This world of confusion and war would be converted into a paradise, a region of peace and universal benevolence. Do not the strength of human lust, and the early period in which children appear to be under its influence, prove that man is born in sin, that he is the child of wrath, the servant of unrighteousness? In contemplating these proofs of human depravity, can we forbear to exclaim, *Lord, what is man!* Fallen from his primitive state of innocence and dignity, he is sunk below the very beasts. *How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!* Standing in the midst of a bleeding world, beholding the waste that sin has spread around us, witnessing the tears of widows and orphans, and hearing the groans of the dying, let us mourn over the ruins of the noblest work of God.

II. All war originating from the lusts of men, must be wholly unjustifiable.

These lusts, which produce division, and fightings, are directly contrary to the law of God, an open violation of the two great commandments on which

hang all the law and the prophets. They are at variance too with every precept of the gospel. All the streams from a corrupt fountain must be of the same quality with the fountain. Wars and fightings, coming as they do from the lusts of men, must be repugnant to the precepts of our holy religion. One nation cannot wage war against another, without waging war also against the precepts of the gospel, and setting at defiance the commandment of God, *Thou shalt not kill.*

These remarks are directed wholly against *offensive war*, which one nation wages against another, and carries on by offensive acts, by invading the territory, or by seizing the property, of the citizens of the other nation. The case is far different with respect to defensive war, in which a nation when assailed confines itself strictly to defensive measures, without committing any acts of offence. A war can never be defensive on both sides. For if two nations should confine themselves wholly to measures of defence, no aggressions would take place, and in that case there would be no war. But a war may be, and it generally is, offensive on both sides; for each party acts with the design "to see which shall do the other the most harm."

An offensive war cannot be justified upon any moral or christian principles, or indeed upon any principles which are not subversive of all peace and order in society. Such a war can be waged only from motives of pride and ambition, or to gratify a sense of honor. Though kings and conquerors may offer many pleas to justify such a step, no man can advocate an offensive war, who forms his principles and regulates his conduct by the holy scriptures. But a defensive war is just; it is unavoidable, and therefore necessary. An individual, if attacked by an enemy, whose aim is to take his life, has a right to defend himself. The same right exists in a nation.

It is important, my brethren, that we should understand the character of the war in which this nation is now engaged; and from the observations I have made, you need not be at a loss to determine this point. *The character of the war is offensive, it was not necessary; hence it is unjust.* The war is declared on our part, and is carried on by offensive acts upon the property and persons of individuals. Great Britain indeed was *first* in the transgression. She has trespassed upon our rights, and committed depredations upon our property, when going to and returning from the ports of her enemy. But can this justify a system of indiscriminate plunder against all her subjects?

Some of the Indian tribes charge the United States with unjustly taking from them their lands, and thus diminishing the source of their subsistence. And how do they seek redress? They fall down upon our thinly settled frontiers, and avenge themselves upon a few innocent families, by plunder and murder. Admitting their complaints are reasonable, who will justify them in such measures for redress? Who does not view such deeds with indignation and horror? But mark the similarity between our conduct and theirs. Great-Britain has taken our property, and excluded our vessels from the ports of her enemy; and how do we seek redress? Our privateers fall out from our ports, and seize upon the few British merchantmen that are on our coast, who are no more chargeable with the acts of the government, than the crimes of the pope. While sailing on the seas, the common highway of nations, in pursuit of a living for themselves and families, their property is forcibly taken from them; and if they attempt to defend it, their blood is spilt. Where is the difference between taking away the life of an unoffending man on board his vessel upon the seas, and destroying the life of a peaceable citizen in his dwelling on the land? Our mode of obtaining redress indeed is not marked with such inhumanity

as characterizes the conduct of Indians ; but is not the *principle* in the two cases the same ?

I feel it to be my duty to bear public testimony against the demoralizing practice of privateering. Even should the war be deemed necessary, by some, this mode of carrying it on does not admit of justification. This is a species of war which is waged against innocence and justice ; it is an invasion of the rights of individuals, given them, not by human laws, but by that God, *whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof*. It cannot have any effect upon the policy of a great nation, and therefore it is useless as the means of obtaining justice from the nation that has injured us. Indeed, the practice of surprising and plundering individuals on the sea, is of such a character as ought not to be palliated or excused. It is legalized piracy. And it is the duty of every good citizen to endeavor to discountenance and suppress it.

Will any one plead the authority of the General Government, as a justification of the practice ? Let it be remembered, that the laws of Congress are not paramount to the laws of God. Their authority does not alter the moral character of any action. Congress, however, do not *require any* to engage in this business ; they only grant permission to those who wish to carry on this kind of warfare. I am not therefore pleading against any law of Congress, in condemning the practice of privateering.

We are not to suppose that a declaration of war absolves us from all obligation to obey the rules and precepts of the gospel. We are bound to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves, to respect their persons and property, and in every situation *to do to others as we should wish they should do to us*. Before we engage in any species of warfare, we ought seriously to inquire, whether the war be *necessary* and *just* ; whether we can engage in it with a conscience void of offence, *both towards God and towards man* ; whether we can assist in the war, and obey the precepts

of the gospel—cherish that meek and benevolent temper, which alone can fit us to live, or to die.

We read in Judges, *And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother?* The children of Israel wished to know whether it was *lawful* for them to go to war with the children of Benjamin. They brought the great, and solemn question before God, and waited for an answer from him. They seem to have doubted the justice of such a step, because the children of Benjamin were their brethren. The question of war with Great-Britain we should bring to the bar of conscience, and determine by the word of God. Before we take any part in the present war, we ought to ask whether we ought to go out to battle against our brethren. We descended from England, both nations speak one language, profess the same religion, and are generally of the same customs and manners. Will it not be presumption to ask for the blessing of Heaven on our arms, till we have satisfied ourselves in a lawful manner, that the war is both *just* and *necessary*?

III. From the ravages of war, and the miseries of the world, our attention is naturally turned to the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the only source of light and comfort. This is the only means of reforming the world, and disposing either individuals or nations to do justly and to love mercy. The christian religion is *peace* on earth, and good will to men. To put an end to wars and fightings, the gospel aims to remove their cause. It aims to renew our hearts, to mortify our lusts, and dispose us to be holy in all manner of conversation. How highly should we prize the scriptures! How glorious does God appear in raising men from the depths of sin and misery, in renewing them after his own image, and in inspiring them with sentiments of peace and love! Can a christian delight in war, or engage in plundering the property and destroying the lives of mankind? Will he not be disposed to assist in promoting the peace and salvation of his fellow men?

How does the benevolent heart rejoice in the certain prospect of a day, when peace and righteousness shall reign on earth, when the instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry, when every one may sit under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to molest him! Then will Satan be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more, Christ will reign on earth, and this turbulent world will be turned into a region of peace and happiness. Then war, with all its attending evils, will cease, nation shall no longer lift the sword against nation, neither shall men learn war any more for ever. How earnestly ought we to desire the universal spread of the gospel, and how fervently ought we to pray that the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, may be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, that all dominions may serve and obey him!

IV. If war be so great a calamity, and peace so desirable, let us all see that we are at peace with Heaven. The effects of war among men, though distressing, are light, compared with those which all must feel, who live and die in a state of irreconciliation with God. If we provoke him by our sins, to whet his glittering sword, and to take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies; his anger will burn to the lowest hell; he will make his arrows drunk with blood. O then, acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

AMEN.

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